

The Oval

Volume 6 | Issue 1

Article 15

2013

Squalls

Micah Fields

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/oval>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Fields, Micah (2013) "Squalls," *The Oval*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/oval/vol6/iss1/15>

This Prose is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Oval by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

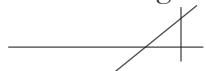
SQUALLS

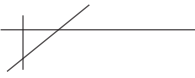
I was sixteen when Katrina blossomed into violent red swirls and made digital landfall on my living room's television. And sixteen when, two hundred miles east of our home in Texas, she killed almost two thousand people. Somewhere, just barely across the Mississippi, was chaos. Families were being hoisted from their rooftops and into the scrawny jon boats of volunteers. Yachts were crashing into storefronts. People were stealing iPods. News anchors gestured wildly at clips of floating corpses, then a sweeping shot of a sunken New Orleans, and finally, a multi-hued reenactment of the storm's progression. But all this felt somewhat peripheral. Sure, our stadium held refugees who ate MRE's and dried off, and my classes got a bit bigger. I even wore a rain jacket and caught a few redfish that had fled their wrecked coastal flats, but Katrina was not my storm.

The next month was promising. Bourbon Street was still sopping, and Rita was churning in the Gulf, this time on a neon track of arrows pointing to our town. Evacuation notices were announced, and the lasting footage of Louisiana houses in soggy piles enforced them. This time it was personal. I handed nails to my father, who stood on a ladder and tacked plywood into the window sills. I scoffed at the emptying neighborhood, the sagging minivans headed to guest rooms in Dallas. We stayed.

And we felt it. We huddled in the bathroom with five dogs. We shuddered when a massive oak speared the roof. Winds purred into the hole in the attic. Culverts became lakes. I straddled our Great Pyrenees in the tub, closed my eyes, and Rita passed.

We arose from our asylum like haggard soldiers, and sectioned the limb in our rafters with a chainsaw. We set its seg-





ments on fire in the front yard, and warmed our palms while evacuees returned, disgruntled from days spent on congested highways. Rita had whimpered after swirling through the beaches, then the hills, and died at our door. In some irrational teenage way, I was disappointed.

So last year, when tropical storm Don threatened to break a ninety day drought, I sacrificed some tip money and drove to Corpus, thinking of rain. With parched river beds and melting asphalt in the rearview, Don got closer. The wall of gray to the east looked like some kind of summer reward, a dangerous and sweating glass of ice water. Sunshine faded with each mile. Seguin, then Beeville, then Robstown, then some faint drops on the windshield, and that musty smell in the vents. I could taste it.

Downtown was deserted and wind-whipped, but didn't seem to care about some storm making its way across a cartoon map. Corpus had run the race before, and wasn't showing its cards to Don without a healthy shove in the chest. They were still serving shrimp on the docks, and I leaned against salty gusts on the pier's edge. People, whatever their reason to stay, were getting drunk and stumbling over corroded wooden planks. Heavy clouds rumbled toward the shore. I thought about being wet, of a soaked t-shirt, and of the dock's planks swelling in the rain. Then somewhere behind me, a small crowd cheered. Don had turned south, and its flashing yellow trajectory was being traced on a screen above the bar, to Baffin Bay.

The edges of the storm whirled off, slinging only a few fat drops our way. The waves fell back into their mild, drowsy sets, and we stayed dry. On the Weather Channel, theories were shared regarding updrafts and air temperatures, frantic explanations for shoddy predictions, but storms are storms. Storms are not formulaic, or methodical, or conservative. Storms are wild, scruffy things. Storms are high school drop-outs in their grandmother's LeSabre. Draw a neat line on a map, and see if they follow it. I wouldn't.